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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [PHUM](#) [KU](#) [FREEDOM](#) [AGENDA](#) [NATIONAL](#) [ASSEMBLY](#)
SUBJECT: FREEDOM AGENDA: REACTIONS TO PARLIAMENT DISSOLUTION

REF: A. Kuwait 01833

[1](#)B. Kuwait 01789

[1](#)1. (U) Summary: The Amir's May 21 decision to dissolve Parliament has Kuwaitis focused on the prospects for meaningful political reform and the impact of women voting in national elections for the first time. A number of public figures have already declared their intent to run for office, among them several women. Some MPs commented that the dissolution was a necessary response to Parliament's failure to resolve the electoral redistricting impasse and to the unprecedented threats to "grill" the Prime Minister. Others accused the Government of failing to take reform seriously and expressed embarrassment at the political in-fighting. End summary.

Mixed Reaction to Dissolution

[1](#)2. (U) The news that the Amir was to dissolve Parliament spread through Kuwait hours before the official announcement was made. The dissolution forces new elections which many hope will bring fresh faces and new views to Parliament. (Note: In every Parliamentary election in Kuwait, 40 to 50 percent of the members have changed and people expect the pattern to continue this time out.) The announcement was met with little surprise as the intensity of the recent debate had for many reached a point of no return. Kuwaiti society is almost evenly split on the decision to dissolve Parliament. According to a spot poll conducted by Arabic daily Al-Qabas, 48 percent of those questioned favored the decision and 47 percent opposed it. In addition, 48 percent do not believe there is ample time to prepare for the June 29 elections.

Dissolution the Only Solution

[1](#)3. (U) A typical pro-Government view was expressed by MP Issam Al-Dabbous, who said the dissolution was taken due to the Amir's desire to "protect the country against practices which disunite" Kuwaitis. A ruling family member noted that dialogue had broken down, with both sides dug in to their positions. However, some opposition voices also welcomed the Amir's decision. Parliamentary candidate Dr. Rola Dashti, Chairman of the Kuwait Economic Society, said that there was "a lack of wisdom in the [constituency] debate" and welcomed the "Amir's wisdom...in taking the right decision."

Disappointed by Dissolution

[1](#)4. (SBU) While avoiding direct criticism of the Amir's action, other Kuwaitis are expressing unhappiness with the decision, saying that Kuwait is embarrassed by the fact that the Government could not resolve the electoral dispute. One of the sons of late Amir Shaykh Jaber said he was "shocked" a deal had not been brokered to ensure the Parliament was not dissolved. Even some of those who may benefit from the upcoming elections expressed concern with the handling of the impasse. Parliamentary candidate Aisha Al-Reshaid said, "I blame both Government and Parliament: they did not solve

the problem wisely." Dashti's campaign manager, Nadia Al-Sharrah, chided the Government for not calling for resignations rather than opting for dissolution." Parliamentary candidate Khawla Al-Ateeqi, a member of the conservative Kuwait Teacher's Society asked, "Where is democracy if a big government can't solve a small problem like this? It is both parties fault that the Parliament was dissolved." A Kuwait Stock Exchange representative who previously predicted the dissolution expressed disappointment with the GOK's decision, asserting that "this is not the way to solve a political impasse, particularly one that involved the demands of the people."

A Real Lesson in Democracy

15. (U) A number of MPs have tried to put a positive spin on the dissolution, arguing that the elections would advance national political interests. Pro-government Shi'a MP Saleh Ashour argued that the June 29 elections would help Parliament learn to be more "realistic" about how to affect change and it would "ripen the Kuwaiti arena politically." Islamist MP Dr. Nasser Al-Sane noted that the current political turmoil is unifying disparate groups in the campaign against corruption.

16. (U) Popular involvement in the political debate is another trend that several observers hope will be sustained. Pro-reform MP Abdul Wahab Al-Haroun called on his colleagues to "capitalize on the popular tide that was supporting us during our rallies... to make sure that this support continues." Reinforcing this view, MP Nasser Al-Sane stated:

"What we have won is the confidence of the people. We are now strongly supported by the people in our campaign to combat corruption. We will witness a great wake-up."

Off and Running

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17. (U) The dissolution is providing women an early opportunity to run for a seat in the 50-member Parliament. According to a May 22 poll, 55 percent of Kuwaitis believe "women's participation will revamp elections." While there is not great optimism that a woman will be elected, several have launched campaigns. Dashti began assembling her advisors and campaign staff hours before the official dissolution announcement. She is joined by several other women including journalist Al-Reshaid, who has been campaigning for months in more conservative neighborhoods; educator Adela Al-Sayer; media activist Iqbal Al-Ahmad; political activist and Kuwait Oil Company executive Dr. Fatima Al-Abdali; Shi'a and Islamic National Consensus Movement candidate Khadija Al-Mahmeed; and newcomer Fatima Al-Mutairi.

18. (U) Among the men, Commerce Minister and former MP Yousef Al-Zalzal announced he will resign his Cabinet post and again run for a Parliament seat. Dr. Saad Bin Tefla, a Kuwait University linguistics professor and former Minister of Information, told the press he too would run for office, siding with those who advocated five electoral districts.

Beat the Heat

19. (U) While parliamentary dissolution came as no surprise, the five week period to prepare for the June 29 election has caught some candidates off guard. The constitution requires that elections be held within two months of the dissolution. The June 29 date is probably dictated by practical considerations. A significant percentage of Kuwaiti society vacations during the summer months when temperatures often exceed 120 degrees Fahrenheit. Holding elections before the peak travel season maximizes the opportunity for the Kuwaiti people to actively participate in the electoral process.

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